

THE MUSLIM WORLD

Monday 17-23 Rabi-Awwal 1418 H.

21-27 July 1997 G

THE MUSLIM WORLD

In a seminar held by Al Ahram Regional Press Institute in Cairo, Muslim World League Secretary General sheds light on the League's foundation, goals, activities, programs and concerns:

"The Muslim World League has spent 5.8 billion riyals, mostly provided by Saudi Arabia, to serve Islam and Muslims.

Reports on the League funneling funds to extremist groups have proved to be groundless as the information provided on this issue is inaccurate.

The League participates in seminars held in the West to spread the true image of Islam.

Dr. al-Obaid extends his thanks and appreciation to the Saudi Government under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah as well as Prince Sultan, for the funds and facilities they have provided to the League.

The League has spent 5.8 billion riyals, mostly provided by Saudi Arabia, to serve Islam and Muslims. The League participates in seminars held in the West to spread the true image of Islam.

[Caption: Dr. Abdullah Bin Saleh al-Obaid]

Secretary General of The Muslim World League in Holy Mecca, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh al Obaid, has stated that the League is inspiring new Muslim generations through a scientific moderate approach of Islam. The league has also exerted persistent efforts in order to help people deepen their understanding of Islam by spreading the Islamic culture that addresses the deficiencies of contemporary thinking. It handles both types of deficiencies: those vehemently fighting Islam and those extremely exaggerating its teachings.

This was stated in His Excellency's speech at the seminar held on Tuesday, 11/3/1418 H. (July 16, 1997) by Al Ahram Regional Press Institute, affiliated with Al Ahram Organization in Cairo, Egypt. The seminar's objectives were to introduce The Muslim World League, its goals and activities in the fields of Islamic Da'wa¹ and relief.

¹ Call to Islam

In His Excellency's speech, he welcomed this seminar and extended thanks to its organizers. Then, he explained the reasons of establishing The Muslim World League, its objectives, councils and bodies, as well as some of its prominent activities.

His Excellency said "After independence, the Islamic nation was in a dire need for an entity to unite and protect it against the malicious conspiracies plotted by its enemies and the atheistic intellectual streams, so that Muslims can regain their unity, solidarity, glory, and leadership. Hence came the call for holding a large Islamic conference in the Holy Mecca. This conference was held on Zul Hija 14th, 1381 (March 21, 1962) . Among the participants were some of the nation's leaders, scholars and thinkers who have decided to establish an Islamic organization with headquarters in the Holy Mecca. They have also decided that such an organization shall possess a council comprising top scholars and thinkers whose mission is to reinforce Islamic solidarity and spread the message of Islam all over the world, so that peace, welfare and happiness can prevail. The Muslim World League, therefore, came to existence as a global popular Islamic organization representing the Islamic peoples and minorities in the world. The League has also played a prominent role in several parts of the world through its offices and the cultural centers, as well as its membership in a number of international organizations. The League, as a consultant non-governmental organization, is a senior supervisory member of the United Nations Social and Economic Council. It is also a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and a supervisory member of the Islamic Conference Organization, attending all of its conferences, including summit conferences and foreign ministers meetings".

His Excellency has clarified that the League's objectives are spreading the message of Islam through legitimate channels, explaining the principles and teachings of Islam, refuting any doubts about Islam, challenging the destructive trends and thoughts, and supporting Islamic issues in a way that best serves Muslims' interests and hopes. It also works on solving Muslims' problems as well as providing them with services covering different fields such as educational, cultural, social, health and others. To these ends, the League coordinates with Islamic organizations and institutions sharing the same objectives, including the World Islamic Council for Da'wa and Relief in Cairo, headed by Sheikh of Al Azhar, and the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, affiliated with the Ministry of Awqaf (*Religious Endowments*) in Egypt, and University of Al Azhar, and other similar official and national organizations in Islamic and Arab world.

His Excellency has explained that the League consists of a number of councils and bodies, the most prominent of which is the World Islamic Conference, that is considered the highest legislative authority in the League. The World Islamic Conference is held whenever it is needed. The second prominent body is the League's Founding Board that consists of about sixty members, mostly

scholars and Islamic thinkers. Members of the Founding Board are representing the Muslim peoples and minorities all over the world. During its sessions, the Board adopts resolutions and recommendations on Islamic issues and its developments, such as the issue of Jerusalem and the Holy Mosque of Al Aqsa, and other public Islamic issues, as well as the issues and problems of the Muslim minorities.

The World Supreme Council for Mosques is another body affiliated with the League. Its objective is to revitalize the mission of the Mosque to undertake the role that it used to undertake during the early days of Islam. One of the Council's objectives is to form a unified Islamic public opinion. Emanating from this Council is a number of continental and local councils concerned with mosques, and maintaining and revitalizing the Mosque's activities all over the world.

One of the councils is the Islamic Fiqh Academy, whose objective is to study any emerging issues or questions concerning Shari'a (Islamic rulings) and to provide clarifications of Islamic judgment under the guidance of the Holy Quran, Sunnah, Ijma'¹ and Analogy. Additionally, its objectives are to demonstrate the superiority of Islamic jurisprudence compared to all positive laws and human legislations. It also struggles for reviving, and spreading Islamic juridical heritage. The Council comprises some of the best jurists of Islamic Sharia and it seeks the assistance of consultants experienced in non-religious sciences in a number of Islamic nations and nations with Muslim minorities.

Afterwards, he introduced the different bodies of the League and outlined the objectives of the Organization of Scientific Inimitability in the Holy Quran and the Noble Sunnah as: 1) gathering and organizing the efforts of Muslim researchers, 2) coordinating among universities and Islamic organizations in order to add a tincture of Islamic "faith" to cosmic sciences, and 3) working through serious and documented research on discovering the subtle meanings of Quranic verses and noble Hadiths (Prophet's sayings) in relation to cosmic sciences in light of the latest scientific discoveries. The Organization attempts also to hold meetings with prominent non-Muslim scientists from all over the world in order to inform them about the outcome of researches of interest to the Organization or researches issued by the organization itself.

He also spoke about the Islamic World Relief Organization in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the League's authority that is specialized in charity and relief efforts. He stated that the Organization's objective is to alleviate the pains of Muslims suffering from wars and abrupt environmental disasters. The Organization also works on the establishment of any necessary projects in the underserved Muslim communities and where poor Muslim minorities live.

He clarified that the League undertakes lots of activities through its councils, bodies, offices and worldwide centers. The objective of these activities is focusing on creating an Islamic public

¹ Consensus of the Muslim scholar community

opinion putting the Da'wa (Islamic missionary work) back on the right track, in order to spare the Muslim youth the troubles of extremism. The League also works on clarifying the true meaning of Islam and rectifying the distorted image of Islam in the minds of non-Muslim people through quiet discussions and public conferences and meetings in which the League's top officials are participating along with several worldwide officials and national authorities. In its Da'wa programs, the League highlights the inculcation of an Islamic moderate approach in Muslim life and thought, bringing up coming generations in accordance with the guidance of the Holy Quran and the traditions of His Messenger (peace and prayers be upon him).

His Excellency affirmed that upon the League's desire for guiding Muslim generations in accordance with a moderate scientific approach, the League has worked hard to increase Islamic awareness. This was accomplished through spreading the Islamic culture addressing the diseases represented by contemporary thought, whether in the form of fighting Islam or extremist understanding of the teachings of Islam. The League undertakes its programs in this field through the publication and distribution of Islamic books on a large scale amongst Muslims and others. It purchases a number of useful books in the areas of creed, Da'wa and defending Islam in order to distribute them in different languages. The League does not only publish books to formulate a balanced Islamic awareness, but also considers education as a solid foundation to form the Muslim character based on a moderate approach to bring our Islamic communities closer to the nature ordained by God upon the Muslim nation, as set out in God's Words "Thus, have We made of you a nation justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves. "

And since the Islamic mission is universal and has no boundaries, the League has opened the doors to dialogue with other religions, especially with followers of the Christian faith. In such a dialogue, the League depends on Shari'a principles and rules set by Islam, as stated by God Almighty in the Holy Quran "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah. If then they turn back, say ye: Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will). And also His Saying And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation).

His Excellency indicated that the League has held good meetings with the followers of other religions, through which the League has refuted some fabrications and suspicions aroused by enemies of Islam against this religion and its noble teachings. In its dialogue, the League focuses on demonstrating the merits of the Islamic religion, its tolerant teachings, moderate approach and ability to find solutions for human problems, and the need of mankind for Islam. It also focuses on

the solutions provided by Islam for political, social and environmental problems suffered by mankind.

His Excellency concluded his speech by saying "The League has provided services in several fields working towards several goals for the Muslim peoples. It's sufficient to say that what the League provided helped achieve the cooperation and solidarity aspired by Muslims on the path of Muslim unity". God Almighty, says, "Surely this Islam is your religion, one religion." "God Almighty speaks the truth." Then, he extended thanks to Al Ahram Organization for this invitation and called for more efforts.

Afterwards, His Excellency answered questions and inquiries from participants and representatives of newspapers, news agencies, satellite channels and radio stations. A number of media representatives from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf held meetings with His Excellency, in which he answered their questions including inquiries about the League's interests, decisions, Islamic centers and its stance towards the relationship between Islam and the West, in addition to other issues of concern to the League. With respect to the League's Islamic activities, His Excellency stated that the League is not concerned only with the achievement of social and economic objectives for the Islamic world, but it has achieved much in respect of the political issues. Most prominent among these issues was the call adopted by the League for establishing the Islamic Conference Organization shortly after the burning Al Aqsa Mosque, as well as its call for boycotting Israel. He indicated that the League held several seminars and conferences on Jerusalem, and participated in achieving reconciliation between Afghani citizens. The League is cooperating with Mujahideen bodies in Kashmir and is still working on achieving reconciliation amongst the fighting groups in Somalia.

Untrue Information

Answering a question on the reports regarding the League's funds being funneled to extremist groups, Dr. al-Obaid said, "This is a closed chapter, especially since information on this issue is not accurate due to the nature of relief work carried out by charities in general". He indicated that there are no infallible authorities or even countries. It has been already proven that there were people who exploited the situation and misused some funds, but we have repeatedly emphasized that charitable organizations had no ill intention. We have asked the concerned parties to provide any information in this regard; but ultimately, we are one "nation". Regarding the League's activities in general, Dr. al-Obaid stated that the League has spent 4 billion Riyals to serve Muslims, and most of these funds were provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, 1.7 billion Riyals, wholly provided by Saudi Arabia, were spent on Muslim relief efforts around the world. Additionally, more than 100 million Riyals were allocated to serve Islamic goals, of which 20 million Riyals were allocated for

mosques, and none of these amounts was spent inside the Kingdom. He expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Government of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz for the funds and facilities they provide to the League.

As for the League's activities in Egypt, His Excellency stated that the League provides support to 18 thousand orphans, and has signed an agreement with Ain Shams University, whereby free scholarships shall be granted to distinguished Muslim students. There is also an effective cooperation with Al Azhar University through providing scholarships to the citizens of Muslim minorities in Chechnya, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Eastern Europe.

Further, there is a continued cooperation with the Islamic Relief Organization in Egypt, where there is an office managing expenditures for the orphans and also programs such as "Productive Families Program", in addition to millions spent by the League on the education of our Egyptian brothers.

Islam and the West

The conflict between Islam and the West is not a religious or ideological issue, but rather a military and economic one.

The time has come for the West to know about Islam as much as they know about the organizations, institutions and economy of the Islamic countries.

Regarding the defamation facing Islam in the West and the League's role in this respect, Dr. Abdullah al-Obaid stated that the image of Muslims in the West is unfortunately bad; and that surely this is attributed to a lot of ignorance, but it is partially intended. In this regard, the League participated in several seminars in the West, the latest of which was a seminar held in Rome and similar others in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and France. All these seminars aimed at unveiling the truth of Islam. He added that the League worked through its centers in London, Madrid, Brussels, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, and Austria where the league spreads books revealing the truth of Islam. As for intentional defamation, he stressed that defaming Islam is sometimes intentional. In this respect, the League has attempted to reveal the parties standing behind these acts. Whenever the League has information that a statesman attacks Islam, the League contacts him/her and clarifies the truth of Islam. This happened with the French Interior Minister, who stated that his attitudes towards Islam were due to the lack of sufficient information about it. Answering a question about the dimensions and significance of selecting the subject "Islam and the West. The Past, The Present and The Future", His Excellency said "The selection of this subject means everyone must face reality and today's needs. Five years ago, the West was inclined to deal with Islam in a new manner, which is based on a misconception of Islam. The West needs to understand the true teachings of Islam, and we need to make them understand our reality and

situation- so the need is mutual. There is no doubt that there are indications pushing the two sides towards engaging in the right dialogue, especially in light of the circumstances and changes taking place now and then. Expectations make us fear the future. Our fear of the future makes us walk on the right path and request the West also to do the same. We cannot deal with each other, unless we understand each other." His Excellency stated that ten years ago, Muslims and the West were united against communism. When communism, represented by Russia, faded away, the friend has become an enemy, and the Mujahideen became enemies, described as terrorists. This was helped by the existence of circumstances, reasons and reactions which created terrorism and a sort of misunderstanding. However, it is not in the interest of mankind in any way to close our eyes and go our separate ways.

He added that the responsibility for clarifying the truth of Islam falls in the first place upon the party who classified Islam as a terrorist religion, that is the West. Then, the responsibility falls also upon Muslims who should clarify the truth - so the responsibility is mutual. It is not only the church, which classified Islam as an enemy, but also the centers of observation, research and strategic studies. Therefore, it is not only an ideological or religious issue, but it is an issue of military and economic conflict as well. Such bodies have also tried to prove the inevitability of such conflict, especially since Islam is still growing all over the world, as it is the message of God and no one can stand against it. The history even proves that whenever Muslims get more besieged, Islam grows even greater. However, it is in the interest of all to understand the truth of Islam. We have scientific and educational institutions looking for the best ways to do that. Let the West study and know Islam- the Islam that we know. The West knows now a lot about Islamic institutions, Islamic personalities, and Islamic countries and their resources. We want them now to know a lot about Islam, which they consider their enemy. I believe the mission of Muslims is to introduce Islam in a language that the West understands. I do not think that they will fear Islam. They will even find happiness in this religion, as found by more than a billion Muslims.

About whether there is an Islamic strategy to enter the new century, Dr. al-Obaid stated that the twenty first century is like other past centuries, and its days carry nothing new as they belong to God. However, there will be new things in terms of treatment and international relationships. That is why Muslims should unite, coordinate their efforts and do their best to understand their religion and introduce it to others, so that Islam may not be misunderstood and exploited by anybody.

This is what the Muslim World League has sought through organizing seminars and conferences in the West. During the last year, the League participated in more than five forums in the West, and we are trying to handle an important issue, which is explaining our Islam to the West and demanding our rights from them. We ask our brethren to unite and to reach a bottom line agreement in order to represent Islam before local authorities in each European country, through one entity to

be elected and chosen by all Islamic organizations. I believe that using these means, we will be able to solve part of the problem.

Difference between Dialogue and Da'wa

Belief is a matter of religious difference. Everybody is free to choose his/her own religion, this is a deep rooted rule in Islam. This is proved by the Al Hudaib Agreement and many others.

Dr. Abdullah warned against the dangers of Ijtihad (*independent interpretation of religion*), which could be harmful, as some Muslims have different opinions on some very well known issues, some of which are based on independent interpretations. This causes unnecessary troubles. Examples for this include statements such as "Islam is a religion of polygamy "; "Islam permits family planning" while their intentions are malicious. There are also those who call for human rights according to what suits them, not based on the teachings of Islam.

Therefore, I think that there is a need for a single entity that should undertake dialogue, whether on the intellectual level or on the religious level. Such an entity should be governed by well defined terms and should be based on Shari'a. He stated that it was very important to differentiate between dialogue and Da'wa; however, dialogue should be in the framework of Da'wa.

In relation to dialogue with followers of other religions, he stated that this comes from the point that there are common interests between Islam and other religions, such as the issue of women, as Muslims and Christians rejected the UN proposals for permitting abortion. There are other common issues such as the prohibition of the degradation of religions and prophets, as well as other common issues in the fields of environment, family and human rights.

League Resolutions Are Not Binding

Answering a question on whether the League's resolutions are binding upon members, he stated that they are not; however, it is inevitable to adopt the juridical opinions issued by the Jurisprudence Council. In fact, the resolutions of the Jurisprudence Council, affiliated with the Islamic Conference Organization, are not binding upon members, unless the members agree on the issue, as when they reached an agreement on limiting the number of pilgrims. If members were adopting different views, then a resolution will not be binding.

Islamic Centers

As for Islamic centers supervised by the League, he said that it has centers in Italy, Belgium, Chad, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Togo, Brazil, Austria, France, and Madrid and many others. Moreover, the League has lots of bodies and authorities affiliated with it such as the General Islamic Conference, the Founding Council, the World Supreme Council for Mosques, the Jurisprudence Council, the International Islamic Relief Organization and the Organization of Scientific Inimitability of the Holy Quran and Noble Sunnah.

Fatwa (ruling) on Organs Transplantation

Regarding the League's opinion on organs transplantation, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League in the Holy Mecca stated that "the Jurisprudence Council affiliated with the League, issued a fatwa (ruling) in this regard, permitting transplantations that cause no harm to the donor's life, as well as the transplantation of organs of the dead; however, he could not remember the exact wording of the ruling."

IESCO Calls to Put an End to Anti-Islam Propaganda

Rabat-Reuter

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IESCO) has called upon U.S. President Bill Clinton to help put an end to the defamation of Islam in the occupied Palestinian territories. In a statement addressed to the U.S president from its headquarters in Rabat the IESCO called him to take the initiative to stop the provocative acts against Islam; and particularly the issuance of publications degrading Prophet Muhammad (peace and prayers be upon him).

The statement referred to the posters placed in Hebron, which agitated Arabs, because the posters depicted the Prophet Muhammad (peace and prayers be upon him) in a bad way. The Head of the Organization, Abdul Aziz Othman Al Nowaijri, in his meeting with the Russian Ambassador to Rabat, also called upon Moscow to mobilize the international community with the aim of putting an end to provocative acts against Islam.

Placing this poster last June 27th on twenty stores in the Palestinian section of Hebron has agitated the Muslim feelings and augmented protests against Israel. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is affiliated with the Islamic Conference Organization and is concerned with the revival of the Islamic culture.

Positive Initiative in Sweden

Parents of some Muslim students at "Roz e Naqor"¹ school in Sweden have called for making Arabic classes equal to classes of other languages at school, and organizing classes about Islam for those who are interested. This initiative is considered the first of its kind in Swedish schools.

The Muslim community hopes that the decision will be generalized to include the rest of Swedish schools, as adopted in other European countries.

In an interview with the Egyptian "Al Masaa" Newspaper:

Dr. Ibn Obaid Praises the League's Role in Serving Muslims

The League Pays Special Attention to the Liberation of Jerusalem & Supporting Palestinians

Saudi News Agency- Cairo

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Dr. Abudllah Bin Saleh al-Obaid shed lights on the significant role undertaken by the League in serving Muslims and the Islamic world.

In an interview with the Egyptian Newspaper "Al Masaa", he affirmed that the League has duly played its social, economic and political role in serving the causes of the Islamic world and Muslim minorities all over the world. He stated that the League has succeeded in settling several problems in the Islamic world. Dr. al-Obaid indicated that the Muslim World League was completely keen on eliminating the degraded image of Muslims in the eyes of the West and its media, clarifying that the League held several seminars in Europe and the United States in this regard to improve this image.

He added "this included the participation by the League representatives in an educational seminar in Madrid and holding several seminars in London, Italy and Austria, in addition to printing several books within the Da'wat Al Haq (*Message of Truth*) series addressing this issue and providing the optimal image of Islam". He also stated that twenty-five years ago, the Muslim World League was the first to call for a dialogue with the followers of other religions. Such a dialog was based on the Islamic principles, rules and the Islamic tolerance. He indicated that the League cooperated with some moderate individuals in the West, such as Britain's Crown Prince Charles who, on several occasions, praised Islam, describing it as a good religion for every time and place. Concerning the issue of Organs Transplantation Dr. al-Obaid emphasized that the Islamic Jurisprudence Council settled this question by issuing a fatwa (Ruling) permitting the transplantation of the organs of the dead to the living on certain conditions. The Secretary General of the Muslim World League clarified that the League cooperates with Al Azhar on providing scholarships to some students, and

¹ School Name could not be verified

also provides financial and in-kind aids to 18,000 orphans in Egypt through the Orphan Support Program. Dr. al-Obaid has also indicated that the League paid special attention to the liberation of Jerusalem and supporting Palestinians in the occupied territories, and also it contributes to the facilitation of conferences stressing the Muslims' rights to Jerusalem and Al Aqsa Mosque. The League also engages in fund-raising activities for the Palestinian people.